



AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER OF LONG BEACH

Community Engagement Report

January 2019 – September 2019

ENVIRON

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Wiggins Hunter
Consulting Group

CITY OF
LONG BEACH

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I. Executive Summary

Background:

On February 20, 2018, the City Council approved an item requesting the City Manager to work with community stakeholders to identify potential City-owned sites in Long Beach for an African American Cultural Center. On May 15, 2018, City staff provided a memorandum to the City Council with an inventory of potential sites. For next steps, staff recommended further exploration with a subject matter expert with experience in the design, construction, operation, maintenance, and funding of historical/cultural institutions, as well as community engagement, contingent on the identification of a funding source.

In December 2018, City staff selected Lord Cultural Resources as the cultural and institutional planning consultant and Environ Architecture, Inc. as the community engagement consultant.

Environ Architecture, Inc., is a local firm that has executed outreach assignments related to Mental Health America, East Division Police Department Sub-station, and Belmont Aquatic Facility. Environ Architecture partnered with Tasha W. Hunter of Wiggins Hunter Consulting Group and President of the Arts Council for Long Beach to lead the facilitation of the community engagement process.

Outreach Methods:

The Community Engagement Team brought together more than 250 community members to participate in the African American Cultural Center Visioning Process.

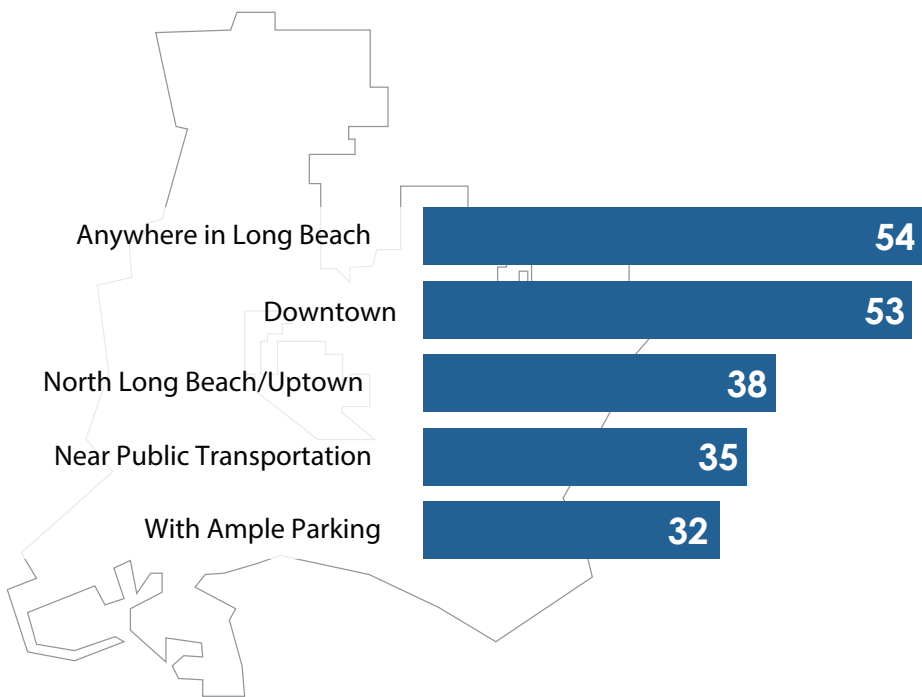
- 3 Community Roundtables:** Attendees participated in facilitated discussions about potential components of an African American Cultural Center in Long Beach.
- 7 Focus Groups:** Members of community organizations provided perspective related to their organization's mission and experiences.
- 12 Community Events:** Surveys, conversations and outreach materials were distributed to promote the African American Cultural Center Visioning Process
- 18 Stakeholder Interviews:** Community members, key stakeholders and other prominent individuals discussed their experiences in Long Beach, its history, and African American cultural assets.
- 75 Survey Responses:** Online and paper surveys were administered

Results:

The Community Engagement team posed five questions about different aspects of an African American Cultural Center at every meeting. The top five categories of answers for each are represented below.

1

Location:
“Where should an African American Cultural Center be located in the City of Long Beach?”



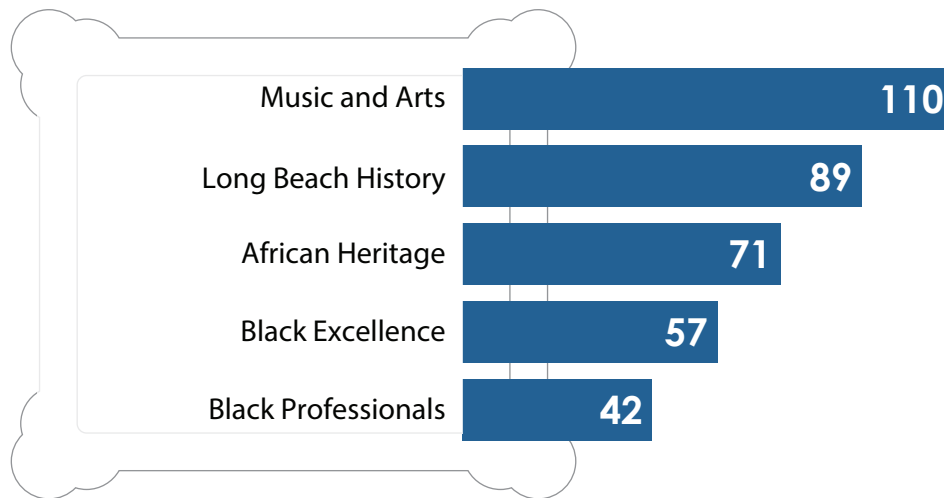
Participants wanted the cultural center located anywhere in Long Beach, but particularly in Downtown or North Long Beach. They also mentioned a need for ample parking and access to public transportation.



2

Exhibits:

"What types of exhibits should be displayed at an African American Cultural Center?"

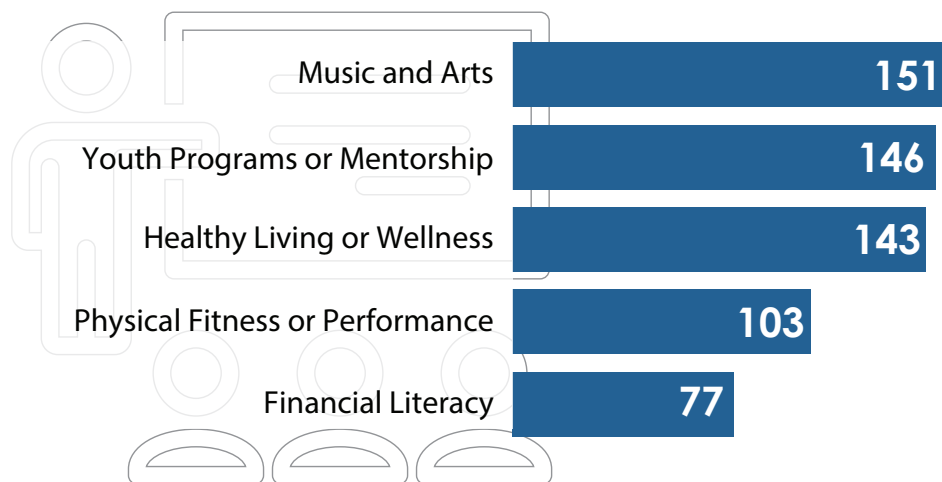


Participants specifically expressed interest in exhibits dedicated to pre-slavery Black and African American history from the past to present (with an educational speaker series), the history of successful African American celebrities, leaders, and inventors in Long Beach, pop-up galleries with rotating exhibits, and the history of jazz and gospel music history.

3

Programs and Classes:

"What programs and/or classes should be included in an African American Cultural Center?"

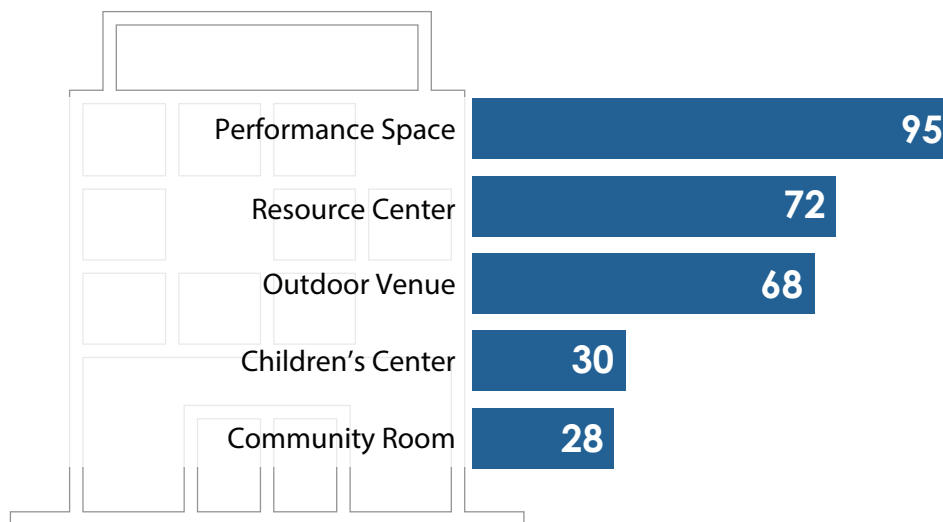


Participants expressed enthusiasm for programs and classes across a range of categories as a means of community enrichment. Requested programs centered around health and wellness, such as cooking classes featuring healthy dishes of the African diaspora, including Soul food, Caribbean, and African cuisine. Participants also mentioned financial education and literacy courses teaching self-reliance and economic empowerment. Participants requested youth mentoring programs as well as music engineering and instruction classes.

4

Facilities:

"What facilities should be included in an African American Cultural Center?"

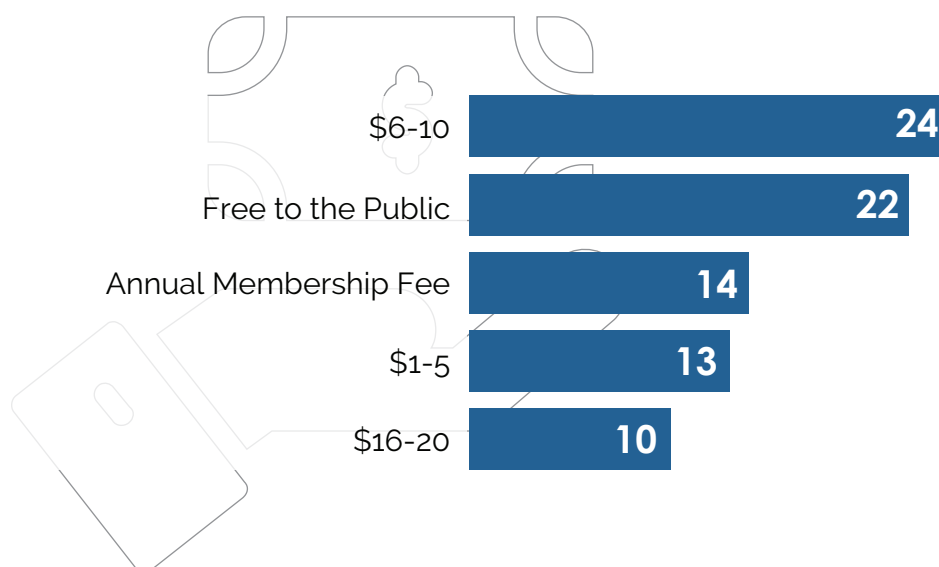


Participants mentioned that an African American Cultural Center should include an amphitheater or event space specifically for performances and speaking engagements. They also requested a community garden, a space for community meetings and gatherings, a commercial kitchen, and a music studio for production and recording. Others requested a resource center providing information for Black small business entrepreneurship as well as a college resource center specifically featuring information on Historic Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

5

Willingness to Pay:

"How much would you be willing to pay to enter an African American Cultural Center?"



Most respondents were willing to pay up to \$10 for entry. Many mentioned a desire for an annual membership program, with monthly free days and discounted rates for students and seniors. This question was only asked at five of the ten outreach events, with 62 voters total.

II. Outreach Methods

The Community Engagement team recognized that the Black or African American community in Long Beach is diverse, with a wide range of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences. The team thus prioritized collaboration with a range of relevant organizations to create a community-driven process that was as inclusive as possible. The Community Engagement team partnered with local government agencies, educational institutions, the African American Cultural Center Community Advisory Committee, community groups, and residents, to solicit community input through several mediums, detailed below.

Participants ranged from ages 5 to 99 years of age and included elected officials, clergy, community leaders, K-12 and college students, academics, professionals, and current and former Long Beach residents.

The City of Long Beach's Office of Civic Innovation maintained a website as a hub for individuals invested in the African American Cultural Center Community Visioning Process to access documents, event dates and locations, and the online survey. The Community Engagement team shared information on how to provide input through partnering organizations, individuals, and the African American Cultural Center Advisory Committee. Information on Community Engagement events was circulated via social media, existing email lists, posted flyers, and word of mouth.

Discussion Topics:

At each Community Engagement meeting, questions were posed to participants for discussion:

- Where should an African American Cultural Center be located in the City of Long Beach?
- What types of exhibits should be displayed at an African American Cultural Center?
- What programs and/or classes should be included in an African American Cultural Center?
- What facilities should be included in an African American Cultural Center?
- How much would you be willing to pay to enter an African American Cultural Center?

Participants were then asked to discuss and vote on the answers they felt most important.

Community Engagement Events:

1 Community Roundtables

Three Community Roundtable events were hosted in different areas of Long Beach from March to May 2019. Attendees participated in facilitated discussions about potential components of an African American Cultural Center in Long Beach. Each event followed similar structures designed to be accessible to anyone, regardless of previous meeting attendance.

At each roundtable, the Community Engagement team provided a short presentation, orienting participants to the African American Cultural Center Community Visioning process and outlined the five discussion topics. Participants divided into groups to brainstorm and discuss ideas. When groups reconvened, individuals had the opportunity to vote for each suggestion. Responses were categorized by the Community Engagement team.

The three Community Roundtables were conducted in areas of the city with higher African American populations. The first roundtable took place in Uptown North Long Beach, hosted by the Long Beach Community Action Partnership. This event had approximately 25 community members in attendance and 15 voting participants. The second took place in Central Long Beach, hosted by Christ Second Baptist Church. This event had approximately 25 community members in attendance and 23 voting participants. The third took place in West Long Beach, hosted at the West Facilities Center. This event had approximately 23 community members in attendance and 23 voting participants. All community members at each event were provided the option to vote, some chose not to participate in voting.

2 Focus Groups

Focus group interviews were used to gain perspective of specific community-based organizations. Community-based organizations were selected to solicit input from specific groups or perspectives that might otherwise be underrepresented. Members of community organizations provided perspective related to their organization's mission and experiences. Focus groups were held during regularly scheduled meetings to ensure strong attendance.

The structure of the Focus Groups mirrored the format of the Community Roundtables, albeit with less time allotted. Focus Group participants did not break into groups. Instead, the Community Engagement team asked the questions aloud, and feedback was recorded directly. At the close of the question and answer session, members were invited to vote for each response under each category.

Organization	Location	Participants
Expo Center Senior Group	Expo Arts Center	17
100 Black Men of Long Beach	California State University, Long Beach	21
African American Heritage Society	Burnett Neighborhood Library	13
Black Male Success Initiative	Long Beach City College	6
Coalition of Involved African American Parents	LBUSD Teacher Resource Center	35
Developing Afro American Professionals, Long Beach City College	UpLAB Office	11
The LGBTQ Center Long Beach	The LGBTQ Center Long Beach	3

3 Stakeholder Interviews

One-on-One interviews were used to further engage specific community stakeholders, to better understand these individual's experiences, stories, and perspectives. Each individual was selected based on their leadership and history in the community. The format and structure of each interview varied, but most focused on the person's life and history in Long Beach. The Community Engagement team conducted 18 interviews, either by phone or in person.

Interview Subjects included:

- Vice Mayor Dee Andrews, Council District 6
- Councilmember Al Austin II, Council District 8
- Councilmember Rex Richardson, Council District 9
- Dr. Gloria Arjona, Lecturer in Spanish, Caltech, Musical Artist
- Winifred "Winnie" Carter, Commissioner, Long Beach Senior Citizen Advisory Commission
- LaVerne Duncan, Executive Director, Andy St. Association
- Dr. Minnie Douglas, Former Nursing Professor, LBCC; Long Beach Human Relations Committee, Long Beach Arts Council, Long Beach Day Nursery, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
- John Malveaux, President, Long Beach Central Area Association; Creative Director, MusicUNTOLD
- H. Maxie-Viltz, Owner, Village Treasures
- Sharon McLucas, Owner, Forgotten Images
- Colette Necada, Program Manager for Intensive Case Management, Lutheran Social Service
- Dr. Alex J. Norman, Professor Emeritus, UCLA School of Public Affairs
- Debra Peterson, Coordinator/Counselor, Long Beach City College
- Renee Quarles, Founder and CEO, Shades of Afrika
- Ahmed Saafir, Chair, Long Beach Community Improvement League,
- Peggy Trotter Dammond Preacely, SNCC Member, Freedom Rider, Civil Rights Activist-Artist, Speaker
- Danielle Walker, Volunteer, Shades of Afrika
- Rev. Dr. Leon Wood Jr., President, Success in Challenges, Inc.

4 Online and Paper Surveys

In order to solicit input from people unable to attend Community Roundtables or Focus Groups, the Community Engagement Team also administered a survey. This survey was available online from March – June 2019 and was also administered in paper form at various events. There was a total of 75 survey responses.

Age	Percent of Responses
56+	31%
46-55	19%
36-45	13%
25-35	16%
18-24	4%
0-17	17%

Survey Questions:

1. What is your relationship to Long Beach?
2. What is your age?
3. What facilities would you like to be included in an African American Cultural Center in Long Beach? (example: theater, art space, studio, library).
4. What programs, classes, topics, or exhibits would you like to be offered by an African Cultural Center in Long Beach?
5. Where in Long Beach would you like an African American Cultural Center to be located? (See map below for reference – North, South, East, West Long Beach, Other).
6. What is the most you would be willing to pay to enter?
7. What are some important African American cultural assets in Long Beach, both past and present? Cultural assets are any significant historic locations, facilities, persons, or events that should be recognized (e.g. The MLK Parade, the Michelle Obama Library, Forgotten Images Exhibit, or “Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow” Black History Month Celebration).
8. What cultural activities, classes, or events do you participate in outside of Long Beach? Please respond “None” if not applicable.
9. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?



5 Community Meetings and Events

The Community Engagement Team engaged attendees at 12 different community meetings and events, distributing flyers for community roundtable events and Committee meetings, inviting people to respond via paper or online surveys, and presenting on the African American Cultural Center Community Visioning Process. The strategy for engagement differed depending on the event.

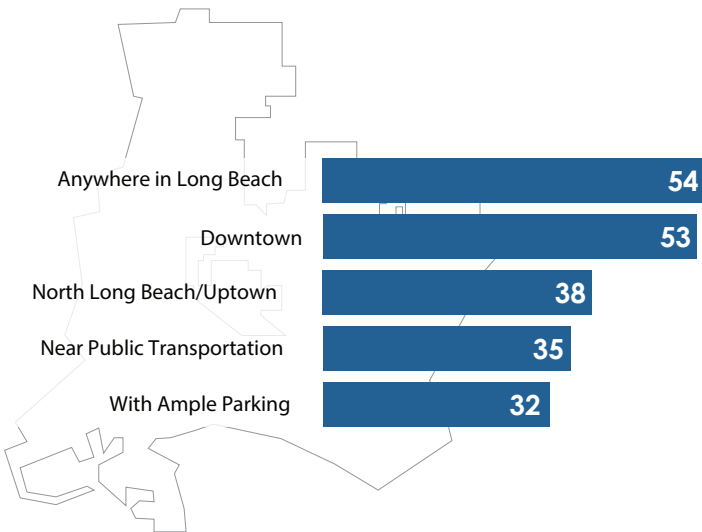
Event	Location	Participants	Strategy
Long Beach Ministers Alliance	Century Villages at Cabrillo	20+	Presentation
RISE! Black History Celebration and Panel Discussion	Long Beach City College	40+	Flyers for Community Roundtables distributed
Young, Gifted & Talented Black History Celebration	Expo Arts Center	100+	Flyers for Community Roundtables distributed
LA Commons and Leimert Park Artwalk Community Leadership Meeting	Leimert Park	15	Presentation
Celebrating Black Excellence	Michelle Obama Neighborhood Library	150	Flyers distributed, Surveys administered
Equity in the Arts, Long Beach Opera	American Art	300+	Flyers distributed
Creative Long Beach Internship Luncheon, Arts Council for Long Beach	The Reef	150	Networking
Conversation with Lonnie Bunche, Founding Director of African American Museum of History and Culture	California African American Museum	100+	Networking
13th Annual CSUDH Earth Day Festival	California State University, Dominguez Hills	100	Flyers distributed, Networking
Earth Day Music Festival	Inglewood, CA	100+	Flyers distributed, Networking
LBCC Town Hall Meeting	Long Beach City College	15	Flyers distributed, Networking
Juneteenth Celebration of Freedom	King Park	100	Flyers distributed, Surveys administered, Networking

III. Results and Findings

The Community Engagement team posed five questions about different aspects of an African American Cultural Center at every meeting. The top five categories of answers for each are represented below.

- 1

Location:
“Where should an African American Cultural Center be located in the City of Long Beach?”



Participants top vote was to have the Cultural Center located anywhere in Long Beach and second vote in Downtown Long Beach. They also mentioned a need for ample parking and access to public transportation. Uptown Long Beach received the third most votes for a specific area. Focus Group participants expressed interest in the new developments in Uptown North Long Beach as indicating that it would be an optimal location for an African American Cultural Center. North Long Beach is a culturally diverse community with a historically engaged African American population.

Participants also specifically mentioned locating the Cultural Center near public parks and libraries, such as King Park and Ernest McBride Park in West Long Beach, Cesar Chavez Park in Downtown, and the Michelle Obama Neighborhood Library in North Long Beach. Participants also mentioned vacant or empty lots in their neighborhoods as possible locations.

One interesting conversation was the definition of “East Long Beach” - African American residents repeatedly referred to “East Long Beach” as the area around Pacific Coast Highway west of Cherry Avenue, which is often more popularly understood as “Central Long Beach”. This was a result of African American residents historically feeling unwelcome in areas east of Cherry Avenue, for various reasons.

Specific Ideas Contributing to the Above Categories:

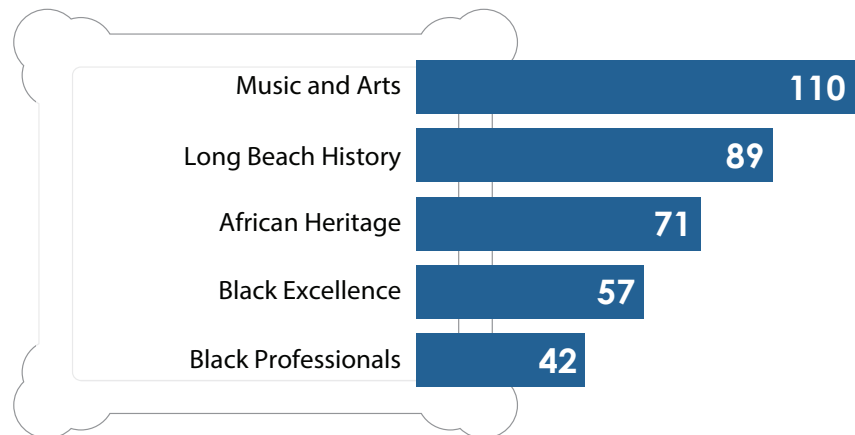
North Long Beach/Uptown	Vote
North Long Beach	32
Near Michelle Obama Library	3
Council District 9	2
Bixby Knolls	1

Downtown	Vote
Downtown Long Beach Area	32
Near Acres of Books Site	14
Near Bixby Park	4
Near Chavez Park	3

Central Long Beach	Vote
Vacant Storefronts	9
Central Long Beach (Anywhere)	7
Near McBride Park/Cal Rec Center	5
Near Memorial Hospital	2
Near King Park	6
Near LBCC – Pacific Coast Highway	1

2

Exhibits:
“What types of exhibits should be displayed at an African American Cultural Center?”



Participants specifically expressed interest in exhibits dedicated to pre-slavery Black and African American history from the past to present (with an educational speaker series), the history of successful African American celebrities, leaders, and inventors in Long Beach, pop-up galleries with rotating exhibits, and the history of jazz and gospel music history.

Exhibits focused on music and arts-related subjects received the most votes, but participants also mentioned that the exhibits should extend beyond the entertainment side of African American/Black culture. Pop-up or revolving exhibits were also mentioned. Many participants noted that the Cultural Center could be a permanent space for the Forgotten Images Gallery, which contains many artifacts from slavery to present day. Exhibits focusing on Long Beach history was very popular, specifically highlighting the City’s military roots and legacy of successful entrepreneurs, inventors, athletes, entertainers, Black hair and fashion, Black organizations, and a Wall of Excellence. Many saw exhibits as an educational tool for all cultures to truly learn about the African American/Black community.

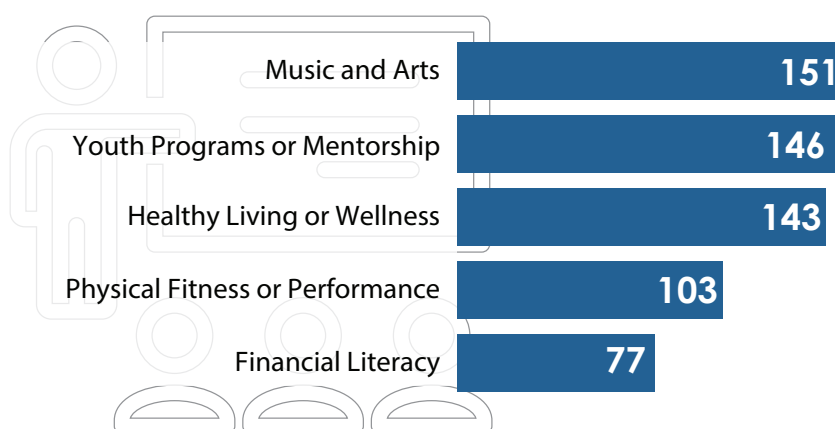
Throughout the community engagement process, there were repeated discussions about the appropriate name for the cultural center, with participants debating if it should be African American, Black, Afrikana, Pan-African, African Diaspora, or many others. There were many strong opinions on this question relating to the core identity and audience of any potential cultural center, which should be explored in the future.

Specific Ideas Contributing to the Above Category:

African Heritage	Vote
Historic and Current African Heritage Speaker Series	35
Ancestry Technology	14
History of Black Hair	11
Black History prior to Slavery	6

Black Professionals	Vote
Black Politicians	21
Black Lawyers	21

- 3** Programs and Classes:
“What programs and/or
classes should be included in
an African American Cultural
Center?”



Participants expressed enthusiasm for programs and classes across a range of categories as a means of community enrichment. Music and Arts programs such as African drum and dance classes, history of Black music (Gospel, Jazz, Hip Hop, etc.), and music engineering workshops were the most requested. Youth mentoring programs as an opportunity for intergenerational exchange and rites of passage were also emphasized. Participants also mentioned LGBTQ parenting classes. Other requested programs centered around health and wellness, such as cooking classes featuring healthy dishes of the African diaspora, including Soul Food, Caribbean, and African cuisine. Participants also mentioned financial education and literacy courses teaching self-reliance and economic empowerment.

Specific Ideas Contributing to the Above Category:

Music and Arts	Vote
Music Engineering	37
Music Classes	36
African Drumming	34
History of Music	21
Arts and Crafts	13
History of Jazz	10

Youth Programs or Mentorship	Vote
Mentoring Youth	37
African American/Black Awareness Workshops	36
Youth Entrepreneurs	34
Black Mommy and Me Classes	21
After School Programs	13
LGBTQ Parenting	3

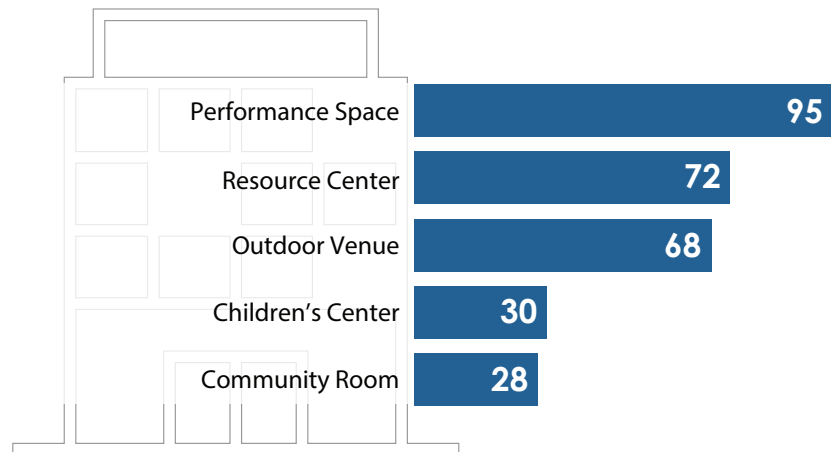
Healthy Living or Wellness	Vote
Diaspora Cooking Classes	71
Healthy Eating	29
Generational Illness	15
Holistic Health Classes	15
Infant Health	10
Wellness or Wellbeing Classes	3

Physical Fitness or Performance	Vote
Dance Classes	30
Capoeira Culture and Awareness	21
Classes on Stage Presence	21
Self Defense	21
Lectures or Concerts	10

Financial Literacy	Vote
Financial Education	58
Grant Writing	15
Entrepreneur Incubator	11
Gardening for Profit	3

4

Facilities:
“What facilities should be included in an African American Cultural Center?”



Participants recommended that an African American Cultural Center should include an amphitheater or event space specifically for performances and speaking engagements, some emphasizing that this could be a source of revenue for the Cultural Center. They also requested a community garden, a space for community meetings and gatherings, a commercial kitchen, and a music studio for production and recording. Others requested a resource center providing information for Black small business entrepreneurship as well as a college resource center specifically featuring information on Historic Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Participants also recommended a children's area with access to technology and play space. Others mentioned a meditation space that would serve as a place to reflect on the powerful experiences within the cultural center.

Specific Ideas Contributing to the Above Category:

Performance Space	Vote
Performance or Amphitheater	63
Educational Space	13
Theater Events	13
Speaking Engagements	6

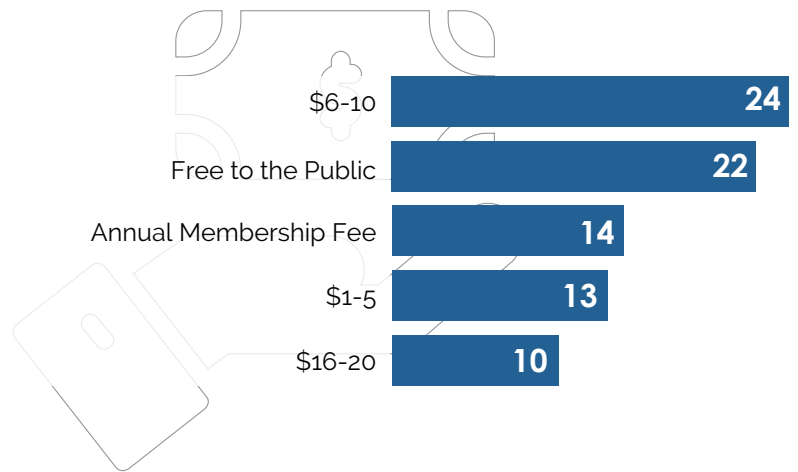
Resource Center	Vote
Black Business Resources	22
HBCU Resource Center	22
Oral History	17
Business Development	14
Library	13
Legal Resources	3

Outdoor Venue	Vote
Garden for all	39
Garden for Special Needs Individuals	14
Reflection Garden	10
Meditation Center	5

Children's Center	Vote
Technology Center	15
Play Space	15

5

Willingness to Pay:
“How much would you be willing to
pay to enter an African American
Cultural Center?”



The majority of respondents were willing to pay up to \$10 for entry. Many mentioned a desire for an annual membership program, with monthly free days and discounted rates for students and seniors. This question was only asked at five of the ten outreach events, with 62 voters total.



IV. Conclusion

The prospect of an African American Cultural Center of Long Beach was greeted with enthusiasm from a wide range of people, as a means for celebrating and educating the African American community that has helped build the unique character of the City of Long Beach for over a century. Recognizing the past, present, and future contributions of the African American community was seen as a vital component in changing the negative narrative that has often been projected in society. Many community members strongly believe it is time for Long Beach to have a Cultural Center dedicated specifically to the African American or Black experience. This Cultural Center could serve as a central location for strengthening and healing in the African American community, as well as an economic generator and cultural destination for people of all ages, cultures, and backgrounds.

Over 250 individuals were actively engaged through this process, sharing their vision for the location, exhibits, programs and classes, and facilities available in an African American Cultural Center of Long Beach.

Community members often expressed deep appreciation, excitement, and gratitude for the opportunity to participate in this important visioning process. Many community members were actively engaged even outside of events, taking time to ask questions, send emails, and attend African American Cultural Center Community Advisory Committee meetings. Many also expressed interest in hosting ongoing conversations, focus groups, and research beyond this initial phase of community engagement.



Acknowledgements

To the Long Beach African American community and its supporters, thank you for your time, voice, stories, history, and pride. This visioning process would not have been possible without you.

MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

Dr. Robert Garcia, Mayor
Lena Gonzalez, Councilwoman, 1st District
Jeannine Pearce, Councilwoman, 2nd District
Suzie Price, Councilwoman, 3rd District
Daryl Supernaw, Councilman, 4th District
Stacy Mungo, Councilwoman, 5th District
Dee Andrews, Vice Mayor and Councilmember, 6th District
Roberto Uranga, Councilman, 7th District
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Monte B. Beard, Long Beach NAACP
Darcelle Bradley
Charles Brown, Lyde Enterprises
Gerald Burford, 100 Black Men of Long Beach, Inc.

Valenda Dennard, City of Long Beach
Angelo Dickens II, ReMax
Dr. Minnie Douglas
LaVerne Duncan, Andy Street Community Association
Gregory Johnson, DreamKreator Studio
Carl Kemp
Sharon McLucas, Forgotten Images
Renee Quarles, Shades of Afrika
Ahmed Saafir, Long Beach Community Improvement League
Sakkara Thomas, Queens Historical Society, Inc.
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Griselda Suarez, Arts Council for Long Beach
Glenda Williams, City of Long Beach

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

100 Black Men of Long Beach
African American Heritage Society
Arts Council for Long Beach
Black Male Success Initiative, Long Beach City College
California State University, Long Beach
Christ Second Baptist Church
Coalition of Involved African American Parents
Expo Arts Center
The LGBTQ Center Long Beach
Long Beach City College
Long Beach Community Action Partnership
Long Beach NAACP
Long Beach Unified School District
Pan Afrikan Art Gallery & Studio Museum
Queens Historical Society
West Facilities Center
Young Gifted and Talented Black History Club

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To request this information in an alternative format or to request a reasonable accommodation, please contact Office of Civic Innovation at i-team@longbeach.gov or 562.570.5104. A minimum of three (3) business days is requested to ensure availability. Reasonable attempts will be made to accommodate request made within less than three (3) business days.